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ABSTRACT

Numerous reports calling for reform in education have resulted in trends showing greater emphasis toward practical preparation experiences in teacher education. Many teacher education programs now stress more hours of teacher preparation devoted to professional education curriculum, strengthened and longer clinical experiences, stronger guidelines concerning the qualifications and responsibilities of university supervisors and cooperating teachers, five-year preparation programs, and more field experience. Some educators have expressed concern about the inclusion of too many practical experiences in teacher education programs, objecting that the prospective teacher may be unduly influenced by the ongoing practices they observe during these experiences. A five-page reference list is included. (CB)

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An Analysis of Contemporary Trends in Practical Preparation
Experiences in Teacher Education

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An Analysis of Contemporary Trends in Practical Preparation
Experiences in Teacher Education

Practical experience in the form of practice teaching was a part of the early normal school. These "normal schools usually had some sort of practice teaching and a course in mental philosophy, but there was no sound theoretical foundation" (Pulliam, 1982). As the normal schools expanded their offerings and lengthened the course of study, the role of practice teaching in Teacher Training was also expanded. These practical experiences usually occurred in a concentrated fashion and became the foundation for the idea of student teaching or the internship.

For some years now, the idea of an early field experience has been gaining support, and often, one of the reasons given is that teacher education programs are now too theoretical in nature. In 1981 Ishler and Kay found that nearly all teacher education programs in the United States include some form of early field experiences (EFE) prior to student teaching (internship). Ninety-nine percent of the respondents to their survey indicated they had programs that included EFE. Eighty percent of those indicated that EFE had been included in their programs for more than five years. In a study of 462 institutional members of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), Puckett (1982) found that 99% included EFE in their elementary programs. Heald (1983) found that students of education must complete about 30 clock hours of clinical experiences before being admitted to teacher education, and they must complete about 50 to 100 additional clock hours before being admitted to student teaching. When compared to earlier studies of clinical experiences (Mora, 1975), this component of professional education has grown from about 280 clock hours to about 420 hours, an increase of 50 percent over the eight-year period. Further, Yates and Johnson (1982) and the Research Committee of the Field Directors Forum (1982), a special interest group of the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE),

indicate that the amount of time spent in completing student teaching requirements has steadily increased.

The impetus for the recent calls for expanding field experiences in the teacher education curriculum has come primarily from two sources--professional and legal groups. Professional sources include teachers themselves as well as those who design teacher education curricula, educational accreditation agencies and educational reform task forces. Legal sources appear to be state and national legislatures and agencies, and administrative rules.

Teaching practitioners hold their practical experiences in high regard. Practical preparation experiences, especially student teaching, have been lauded by teachers as the most valuable part of professional education programs. This was the sentiment of James B. Conant in The Education of American Teachers (1963), and it has been substantiated with research by Joyce, Yarger, Howey, Harbick and Kluwin (1977). Also, "(I)n 1972 the Commission of Public School Personnel Policies in Ohio reported that 78 percent of the teachers who had graduated from the 53 teacher education institutions in the state thought student teaching was the most valuable part of their preparation" (Pulliam, 1982). Yet, the report also found that student teaching is insufficient in time allowed, poorly supervised and comes too late in the student's program.

Educators have long been aware that beginning teachers claim that the practical experience gained from student teaching is the most relevant aspect of teacher education programs. (Hermanowicz, 1966) Gliessman (1984) expressed the sentiments of many practitioners when he said, "... practice... has traditionally been viewed as the quintessence of teaching. It is here where previously learned concepts do or do not come together and where skills fit or fail to fit. Whatever the values, shortcomings, or irrelevancies of the teacher education program, it is held to be through practice that one really learns to teach."

A number of institutions that prepare teachers have shifted away from the use

of the term student teaching to either internship or clinical experience. The latter term is a favorite among those who wish to model teacher education after the medical profession. The model would incorporate a year of internship after the granting of the baccalaureate degree, during which the educational intern would receive a stipend for his or her services. During this time, also, the educational intern would receive supervision from a certified teacher much in the same way that medical interns receive clinical supervision from doctors. According to Pulliam, "By 1980, Florida and Oklahoma had passed laws requiring teacher candidates to spend a fifth year in schools as teacher interns before granting full certification." (1982).

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) also influences the number of hours in the professional education curriculum devoted to practical experiences. One NCATE standard states:

The professional studies component of each curriculum includes the systematic study of teaching and learning theory with appropriate laboratory clinical experience.

The following questions must be answered during the review of a college's teacher education program.

1. What practices or procedures show that the study of teaching and learning theory requires and is accompanied by laboratory experiences (observation, demonstration, problem-solving, tutoring, microteaching, and/or other direct experiential activities)?
2. What are the provisions for clinical experiences (diagnosing and treating individual cases, practices or problems)?
3. What data indicate that all prospective teachers have laboratory and clinical experiences under the guidance of an experienced teacher?
4. What evidence shows that the programs of study of all prospective teachers include the systematic study of teaching and learning theory

with appropriate laboratory and clinical experience?

In addition, NCATE Redesign, published in 1984, clearly indicates that clinical experiences should be strengthened.

Other professional organizations encourage practical experiences in their reports and recommendations to the field. For example, the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education identified the knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences its members consider necessary for a beginning teacher in the report Educating a Profession: Profiles of a Beginning Teacher (1983). The recommendation for an alternative teacher preparation program includes a supervised internship in which candidates demonstrate competency. This field experience should be jointly developed and supervised through cooperative university-school arrangements, according to association members.

The Association of Teacher Education, in its Guidelines for Professional Experiences in Teacher Education (1986), clearly delineates the qualifications and responsibilities of college and university supervisors of professional experiences and the school supervisors to whom student teachers are assigned.

Teacher reform reports and the equal number of responses to those reports call for strengthening teacher education programs. Yet, not one of them calls for decreasing the amount of practical experiences in the total educational program. All of them, it seems, call for more clinical experiences, even if it means lengthening the education program by one or two years.

In its report, A Nation at Risk (1983), the National Commission on Excellence in Education complained that, nationally, elementary school teacher candidates spent 41 percent of their course time in education courses. The impression one receives from the report is that more of this time should be devoted to preservice clinical experiences.

The National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, an independent commission set up by AACTE, released a report in February, 1985. It states all

of the following:

1. (Commission members) "...want prospective teachers who not only have studied how to organize groups of children, but also have practiced doing so under the tutelage of an effective supervisor, thereby assuring employers that their potential teacher has had some successful experience."
2. "Further, teachers need considerable practice in real situations, where their work is constructively criticized."
3. "Prospective teachers also need experience teaching in real and simulated circumstances, and to have this teaching analyzed and criticized in accordance with educational science and pedagogical information that is taught in their college or university classes."
4. "Neither formal instruction nor field work alone is sufficient preparation for the professional teacher. Quality teacher education programs do not have a mechanical separation of classwork and field experiences; instead, field work and on-campus laboratory experiences should accompany all classes, and classes or seminars should accompany all field work, such as student teaching or internships. Such programs are coherent: Early classes, laboratories, and field work anticipate what is to come, and later classes and experiences expand what came before."

In A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, a report by the Carnegie Forum's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession released in 1986, there is a call to, among other things, "... develop a new professional curriculum in graduate schools of education leading to a Master of Teaching degree, based on systematic knowledge of teaching and including internships and residencies in schools."

It appears at first that a fifth-year approach to improving teacher education programs—one where the student pursues a liberal arts degree for the first four years and then focuses for a year on professional education experiences--would eliminate much of the EFE. In fact, this is one of the criticisms of just such a

recommendation of the Holmes group (1986). As one critic noted, "... (if education becomes strictly a graduate-level course of study) we are going to miss enticing people into teacher education at a time (sophomore and junior years) when many students are identifying their careers (AACTE Briefs, 1986)."

However, it does not seem to be the intent of five-year proponents to discourage early field experiences. In fact, a model extended five-year program at Memphis State University includes a component of designated professional and field experiences in a preteaching program that the student undertakes while enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences as an undergraduate student (Burch, 1985).

In addition to the many ways that professionals have used to promote the expansion of clinical experiences in teacher education programs, there are legal routes that have been taken to achieve the same effect. Legal routes have three bases--state laws, administrative rules and regulations of state education agencies, which have the force of law, and federal laws and programs. According to Morris and Curtis (1983), forty states provide statutory authority for student teaching. Even when state laws do not govern field experiences, however, rules and regulations of state departments of education provide for and monitor them. Further, these rules and regulations are requiring more field experiences for program certification. For example, Ohio's "... teacher education students are required to have 300 hours of field and clinical experiences in a sequential program and in a variety of settings prior to student teaching (MacNaughton, Johns, and Rufus, 1982)."

Reviews of The Requirements of Certification indicate that more and more field experiences are being required of students. For example, in 1981-82 Missouri required 4-5 semester hours of methods courses and five semester hours of student teaching for certification of its elementary teachers. In 1982-83, however, Missouri required 15 semester hours of teaching methods and 10 semester

hours of clinical experiences (a minimum of two semester hours of field experiences before student teaching and a minimum of five semester hours in student teaching (Woellner, 1982 & 1983). Finally, a national survey of 1230 teacher training institutions that was conducted by Moore (1979) showed that 80 percent of the reporting institutions had "significant increases in clinical experiences in recent years."

Another force that caused a greater emphasis to be placed on the practical in teacher education was this country's attempt to provide an equal education for all children. For example, the Teacher Corps was a federal program to improve the education of minority and poor students. Begun in 1965, the program proposed innovative reforms in how student teachers are taught and, by requiring student interns to live and work in school communities, incorporated more practical experiences into the educational experiences of the prospective teacher.

Also, the passage of PL 94-142 and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 fostered demands for more clinical experiences to deal with the problems of handicapped students and students who might be from different socio-economic backgrounds than the prospective teachers.

The evidence clearly shows that there is a contemporary trend by professional and legal agents to force greater emphasis toward practical preparation experiences in teacher education. What remains to be determined is whether or not this trend is good. Published literature is divided on the issue and research studies report conflicting findings.

Gehrke (1981) found seven benefits of early field experiences in the literature. They are: 1) early field experiences in teacher education allow students to discover if they like children and want to teach (Tom, 1976; Elliott and Mays, 1979), 2) early field experiences permit the university to determine if a student has the potential to succeed in teaching (Elliott and Mays, 1979), 3) students can practice and develop teaching skills before assuming classroom

responsibility in student teaching (Elliott and Mays, 1979; Seiferth and Samuel, 1979), 4) early field experiences develop a base of perceptions of classroom life on which later theoretical knowledge builds (Tom, 1976), and 5) early field experiences improve communication between universities and public schools (Elliott and Mays, 1979; Krutstchinsky and Moore, 1981), 6) early field experiences accelerate development from student to teacher (Tom, 1976), and 7) early field experiences reduce the number of functions student teaching must fulfill (Tom, 1976).

Other research reveals benefits of practical experiences in teacher education programs. Sunal (1980) reported that increased involvement in early field experiences improves a preservice teacher's performance of inquiry skills. Conradson (1973) reported that students develop a more realistic view of teaching as a result of early field experiences and that their attitudes toward teaching improve significantly. Harp (1974) determined that preservice students' concerns veer from self-survival toward pupil-centeredness during early field experiences.

Further, early field experiences help students establish better relationships with administrators, teachers and pupils, according to Austin-Martin, Bull, and Molrine (1981). Scherer (1979) reported that students who participate in early field experiences have higher self-concepts than students who do not. Denton (1982) found that early field experiences enhance on-campus programs by helping students relate theory and practice. Finally, Levstik (1982) found that students who participate in early field experience programs tend to drop out of teacher training programs before the training institutions have to take formal action on their retention.

On the other hand, many educators have expressed their apprehensions about including too many practical experiences in teacher education programs. Most objections are the same as those proffered by Dewey (1904) when he "...warned against placing students in public schools before they developed habits of

reflection, and suggested that if students were placed in 'apprenticeship' experiences too soon, they would be overly influenced by the on-going practices found in their placements. As a result, these practicum experiences would stifle students' potential for reflective inquiry and experimental action, while encouraging mindless imitation (Goodman, 1985)." That is, the practice teaching experience would become "...merely a vehicle for socializing the undergraduate into a traditional teaching role in an existing institution (Friedenberg, 1973; Lortie, 1975)."

Goodman's study (1985) substantiated Dewey's concerns. Although the early field experience program Goodman studied was supposed to help students "...to develop a broad perspective of education and to see both the potential and the problems of teaching" and although the students who participated in the study "...considered their field experiences the fundamental substance of professional education," Goodman had these findings: 1) "teaching for the test" was the major determinant of curriculum decisions; 2) the major emphasis was on the product, not the process of education; and 3) most students learned just the "nuts and bolts of running a class." Goodman said his findings "... suggest that most students' field experiences reflected an apprenticeship model. Due to a number of factors including pressure on regular classroom teachers to follow instructional programs and time schedules, and lack of university involvement in EFE (e.g., supervision, cooperation between coursework and field work, and inservice work with cooperating teachers), these students had little opportunity to reflect upon their teaching experiences or experiment with curriculum or instructional strategies."

Beyer (1984), giving an analysis of research results of Iannoccone (1963), Tabachnick, Popkewitz, and Zeichner (1979) and Popkewitz (1977), said, "... there seems to be a general tendency for prolonged field experiences to produce and perpetuate strategies that are congruent with existing institutional and

professional expectations. There is the possibility that immersion in field settings will promote patterns of socialization, and the development of meanings, values, and commitments, which are compatible with the educational status quo--patterns which seem to contribute to the development of 'utilitarian teaching perspectives.'... Thrust into the existing culture of the school, and having less than the professional status of paid teachers and administrators, students may tend to accept existing conditions, patterns, and relationships as forming the boundaries beyond which one need not, or should not prespass... Such patterns may serve to replicate and make more uniform practices of schooling and teaching. They tend to promote what another researcher has called a condition of 'excessive realism' (Katz, 1974)."

Studies on the attitudes of student teachers as they progress through field experience programs indicate that students' attitudes seem to become more negative and custodial. Villeme and Hall (1975) reported a decrease in attitude scores after student teaching. Dutton (1962), Alper and Retish (1972), and Dispoto (1980) found that preservice students' attitudes toward children declined significantly during their field experiences and that their attitudes tended toward those of their cooperating teacher. Jacobs (1968) reported that student teachers' attitudes become more rigid and custodial. Wilbur and Gooding (1977) reported that students become more concealing and less willing to share with other students and teachers. Hoy (1967, 1968, 1969), Fink (1976), Wilbur and Gooding (1977), and Williamson and Campbell (1978) reported that students' ideas about classroom discipline become more custodial and more focused on pupil control as they progress through student teaching. Finally, Iannocone (1963) and Iannocone and Button (1964) said student teachers were increasingly committed to finishing lessons on time rather than to showing concern for pupils.

More recent data dispute earlier studies of preservice teachers' attitudes about management and organization as well as earlier views of the socialization

role of student teaching. Copenhagen, McIntyre, and Norris (1981) and Sacks and Harrington (1982) reported that students expressed more concern for their pupils than for classroom control at the end of their field experiences. Zeichner (1978) challenged the movement toward a custodial attitude in all field experiences.

With reference to the socialization criticism, Zeichner (1980) and Egan (1982) indicated that some students resist the socialization process. Also, Lacey (1977) reported that student teachers play an active role in determining the direction of socialization efforts.

Other criticisms of early field experience programs state that supervisors receive little preparation or training for their role and that there are no legal requirements for serving as a supervising teacher. Moreover, supervision of students in early field experience programs is limited and is usually focused only on those students who are having difficulty. Further, field-based components of teacher education programs are not supported with funds as they should be (Morris and Curtis, 1983).

Prescriptions for improving field experience programs have been advanced. They include requiring certification of supervisors of student teaching (Morris and Curtis, 1983); insuring that teachers do not just teach students how to implement established curriculum but can understand and evaluate the potential of curriculum materials; have education courses address issues of curriculum materials, and insuring that practice teachers understand the philosophical principles that underlie practice teaching (Goodman, 1983).

Goodman (1985) also calls for an expansion of the involvement of universities in early field experiences, careful consideration of the amount of time students spend in EFE, and an examination of the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education programs.

Salzillo and Van Fleet (1977) have proposed that the time student teachers

spend in teaching be reduced and that more time be spent studying the culture of the school and its relationship to the surrounding community. Zeichner (1981-82) proposed the development of a campus-based seminar for student teachers to help them think critically and reflectively about their experiences in the schools.

In summary, there is a trend by professional and legal agents to force greater emphasis toward practical preparation experiences in teacher education. There are conflicting opinions about whether or not this trend toward more practical experiences is good for the profession. Whatever one's opinion, there are opportunities for additional research into the implications of the trend and for the improvement of all teacher education programs.

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